



[Billing Code 7709-02-P]

PENSION BENEFIT GUARANTY CORPORATION

Proposed Submission of Information Collections for OMB Review; Comment Request; Multiemployer Plan Regulations

AGENCY: Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

ACTION: Notice of intention to request extension of OMB approval of information collections.

SUMMARY: The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) intends to request that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) extend approval, under the Paperwork Reduction Act, of collections of information in PBGC's regulations on multiemployer plans under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA). This notice informs the public of PBGC's intent and solicits public comment on the collections of information.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before [insert date 60 days after publication in the Federal Register].

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. (Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.)
- *Email:* paperwork.comments@pbgc.gov.
- *Mail or Hand Delivery:* Regulatory Affairs Division, Office of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 1200 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20005–4026.

All submissions received must include the agency's name (Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, or PBGC) and refer to multiemployer information collection. All comments received will be posted without change to PBGC's website at <https://www.pbgc.gov>, including any personal information provided.

Copies of the collections of information may also be obtained by writing to Disclosure Division, Office of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 1200 K Street NW., Washington, DC 20005-4026, or calling 202-326-4040 during normal business hours. (TTY users may call the Federal relay service toll-free at 800-877-8339 and ask to be connected to 202-326-4040.) PBGC's regulations on multiemployer plans may be accessed on PBGC's Web site at <https://www.pbgc.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Hilary Duke (duke.hilary@pbgc.gov), Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Affairs, Office of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 1200 K Street NW, Washington DC 20005-4026; 202-229-3839. (TTY users may call the Federal relay service toll-free at 800-877-8339 and ask to be connected to 202-229-3839.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: OMB has approved and issued control numbers for seven collections of information in PBGC's regulations relating to multiemployer plans. These collections of information are described below. OMB approvals for these collections of information expire August 31, 2020. PBGC intends to request that OMB extend its approval of these collections of information for three years. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. PBGC is soliciting public comments to—

- Evaluate whether the proposed collections of information are necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;
- Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collections of information, including the validity of the methodologies and assumptions used;

- Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- Minimize the burden of the collections of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, *e.g.*, permitting electronic submission of responses.

Comments should identify the specific part number(s) of the regulation(s) they relate to.

1. Extension of Special Withdrawal Liability Rules (29 CFR Part 4203) (OMB Control Number 1212–0023)

Sections 4203(f) and 4208(e)(3) of ERISA allow PBGC to permit a multiemployer plan to adopt special rules for determining whether a withdrawal from the plan has occurred, subject to PBGC approval.

The regulation specifies the information that a plan that adopts special rules must submit to PBGC about the rules, the plan, and the industry in which the plan operates. PBGC uses the information to determine whether the rules are appropriate for the industry in which the plan functions and do not pose a significant risk to the insurance system.

PBGC estimates that at most one plan sponsor submits a request each year under this regulation. The estimated annual burden of the collection of information is 3 hours and \$7,000.

2. Variances for Sale of Assets (29 CFR Part 4204) (OMB Control Number 1212–0021)

If an employer's covered operations or contribution obligation under a plan ceases, the employer must generally pay withdrawal liability to the plan. Section 4204 of ERISA provides an exception, under certain conditions, where the cessation results from a sale of assets. Among

other things, the buyer must furnish a bond or escrow, and the sale contract must provide for secondary liability of the seller.

The regulation establishes general variances (rules for avoiding the bond/escrow and sale-contract requirements) and authorizes plans to determine whether the variances apply in particular cases. It also allows buyers and sellers to request individual variances from PBGC. Plans and PBGC use the information to determine whether employers qualify for variances.

PBGC estimates that each year, 100 employers submit, and 100 plans respond to, variance requests under the regulation, and one employer submits a variance request to PBGC. The estimated annual burden of the collection of information is 1,050 hours and \$501,000.

3. Reduction or Waiver of Complete Withdrawal Liability (29 CFR Part 4207) (OMB Control Number 1212-0044)

Section 4207 of ERISA allows PBGC to provide for abatement of an employer's complete withdrawal liability, and for plan adoption of alternative abatement rules, where appropriate.

Under the regulation, an employer applies to a plan for an abatement determination, providing information the plan needs to determine whether withdrawal liability should be abated, and the plan notifies the employer of its determination. The employer may, pending plan action, furnish a bond or escrow instead of making withdrawal liability payments, and must notify the plan if it does so. When the plan then makes its determination, it must so notify the bonding or escrow agent.

The regulation also permits plans to adopt their own abatement rules and request PBGC approval. PBGC uses the information in such a request to determine whether the amendment should be approved.

PBGC estimates that each year, at most one employer submits, and one plan responds to, an application for abatement of complete withdrawal liability, and no plan sponsors request approval of plan abatement rules from PBGC. The estimated annual burden of the collection of information is 0.5 hours and \$450.

4. Reduction or Waiver of Partial Withdrawal Liability (29 CFR Part 4208) (OMB Control Number 1212–0039)

Section 4208 of ERISA provides for abatement, in certain circumstances, of an employer's partial withdrawal liability and authorizes PBGC to issue additional partial withdrawal liability abatement rules.

Under the regulation, an employer applies to a plan for an abatement determination, providing information the plan needs to determine whether withdrawal liability should be abated, and the plan notifies the employer of its determination. The employer may, pending plan action, furnish a bond or escrow instead of making withdrawal liability payments, and must notify the plan if it does so. When the plan then makes its determination, it must so notify the bonding or escrow agent.

The regulation also permits plans to adopt their own abatement rules and request PBGC approval. PBGC uses the information in such a request to determine whether the amendment should be approved.

PBGC estimates that each year, at most one employer submits, and one plan responds to, an application for abatement of partial withdrawal liability and no plan sponsors request approval of plan abatement rules from PBGC. The estimated annual burden of the collection of information is 0.50 hours and \$450.

5. Allocating Unfunded Vested Benefits to Withdrawing Employers (29 CFR Part 4211) (OMB Control Number 1212–0035)

Section 4211(c)(5)(A) of ERISA requires PBGC to prescribe how plans can, with PBGC approval, change the way they allocate unfunded vested benefits to withdrawing employers for purposes of calculating withdrawal liability.

The regulation prescribes the information that must be submitted to PBGC by a plan seeking such approval. PBGC uses the information to determine how the amendment changes the way the plan allocates unfunded vested benefits and how it will affect the risk of loss to plan participants and PBGC.

PBGC estimates that 10 plan sponsors submit approval requests each year under this regulation. The estimated annual burden of the collection of information is 100 hours and \$100,000.

6. Notice, Collection, and Redetermination of Withdrawal Liability (29 CFR Part 4219) (OMB Control Number 1212–0034)

Section 4219(c)(1)(D) of ERISA requires that PBGC prescribe regulations for the allocation of a plan’s total unfunded vested benefits in the event of a “mass withdrawal.” ERISA section 4209(c) deals with an employer’s liability for de minimis amounts if the employer withdraws in a “substantial withdrawal.”

The reporting requirements in the regulation give employers notice of a mass withdrawal or substantial withdrawal and advise them of their rights and liabilities. They also provide notice to PBGC so that it can monitor the plan, and they help PBGC assess the possible impact of a withdrawal event on participants and the multiemployer plan insurance program.

PBGC estimates that there are six mass withdrawals and three substantial withdrawals per year. The plan sponsor of a plan subject to a withdrawal covered by the regulation provides notices of the withdrawal to PBGC and to employers covered by the plan, liability assessments to the employers, and a certification to PBGC that assessments have been made. (For a mass withdrawal, there are two assessments and two certifications that deal with two different types of liability. For a substantial withdrawal, there is one assessment and one certification (combined with the withdrawal notice to PBGC).) The estimated annual burden of the collection of information is 45 hours and \$148,500.

7. Procedures for PBGC Approval of Plan Amendments (29 CFR Part 4220)
(OMB Control Number 1212–0031)

Under section 4220 of ERISA, a plan may within certain limits adopt special plan rules regarding when a withdrawal from the plan occurs and how the withdrawing employer's withdrawal liability is determined. Any such special rule is effective only if, within 90 days after receiving notice and a copy of the rule, PBGC either approves or fails to disapprove the rule.

The regulation provides rules for requesting PBGC's approval of an amendment. PBGC needs the required information to identify the plan, evaluate the risk of loss, if any, posed by the plan amendment, and determine whether to approve or disapprove the amendment.

PBGC estimates that at most one plan sponsor submits an approval request per year under this regulation. The estimated annual burden of the collection of information is 2 hours and \$5,000 dollars.

Issued in Washington, DC.

Hilary Duke,
Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Affairs
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation

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